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Education That Matters

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PRESIDENT'S FORUM



Education That Matters

THE YEAR 2014 MARKS the 130th anniversary of the General Order that established the Naval War College to conduct “an advanced course of professional study for naval officers.” Over the ensuing decades the College has expanded to include students from all military services, from national-security-related agencies, and from over sixty-five allied nations. Today, the College is organizationally adaptable, educationally flexible, and more Fleet relevant than ever. The decisions officers make to seek out a service college education are complex, and we are working to make the Naval War College an irresistible choice for our brightest and best young officers.

An officer’s career of twenty to twenty-five years can have as few as a half-dozen decision points when key assignment choices must be made. Many of these choices are essentially “hardwired” as mandatory “career gates” necessary to achieve due-course progression within a chosen community. At the same time, promotion within the officer community is a highly competitive process, and thoughtful officers carefully weigh the advantages that each potential job will bring in terms of increased operational experience, development of executive and decision-making skills, and expansion of their knowledge of “big picture” issues necessary to provide leadership at the most senior levels. Even with the need to stay on a career-relevant “glide slope,” every career has time for professional development, and I would argue that there is no better or faster way for officers to transition from platform-centric expertise to executive leadership competence than completion of the Naval War College program. The investment of one year of study will pay significant dividends for the remainder of their careers. We recognize, however, that there have been administrative hurdles that may have discouraged some “hot-running” officers from seeking the benefits that a service-college education can

provide. We are committed to addressing these important issues and removing these impediments to the maximum extent possible.

In the past, officers attending the resident Naval War College course were provided with “not observed” fitness reports that simply documented their time at the College. Many officers chose not to attend the course out of fear that a year-long “hole” in their career would be detrimental to their chances for promotion. I am happy to announce that a change was recently implemented to provide officers who excel in our academic program (finishing in the top 20 percent of each class) with “observed” reports signed by a Navy two-star. Selection boards will now be able to see that these officers competed with joint service officers in a highly demanding educational program—and came out on top!

While the College’s well-known core courses are extremely rigorous and rewarding, a number of other programs have been developed to enrich further the Newport experience.

- Through a new program, Advanced Studies in Naval Strategy (ASNS), a select group of students will complete a focused concentration on the strategic use of maritime power in the modern age, in addition to completing the College’s three highly relevant core courses, which provide a broad, graduate-level education in joint military operations, the national security environment, and the interaction of strategy and policy. Simultaneously with their core curriculum studies, these select students will also complete a series of three advanced elective courses focusing on international security, strategy and economics, and the strategic role of sea power, both historically and in the future. The final component of the ASNS program will be a focused thirteen-week capstone project that enables students to develop strategic products tailored to specific issues identified by the Fleet and Combatant Commanders. Successful graduates will be assigned a Navy subspecialty code 2300-P to identify them as “Naval Strategists.” The pilot offering of the ASNS program is being conducted during academic year 2013–14, with a ramp-up to a fully staffed program expected by 2015.
- Students with an interest in taking a “deep dive” into research on a range of topics can augment their core courses with selection as Halsey, Mahan, or Gravelly Scholars. These scholars engage in collaborative student/faculty efforts that use operational analysis supported by free-play war gaming to examine in detail such issues as the medium-intensity access/denial challenge; high-intensity conventional warfare centered on a technologically sophisticated access-denial challenge posed by a “near peer” military competitor; and strategic-level challenges, such as nuclear weapons, deterrence, and escalation-control issues. The analysis is conducted at the classified, tactical

level and relies on military and civilian student expertise to maintain its relevance to the Fleet and appropriate staffs.

- Students participating in the College of Naval Command and Staff (CNC&S) intermediate-level Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) course may apply for a competitive appointment to the Maritime Advanced Warfighting School (MAWS), which educates officers to be operational-level leaders—to understand and apply maritime power effectively; to stand up and lead Operational Planning Teams (OPTs); and to think creatively and critically, evaluating complex, chaotic security problems, identifying key causes and effects, developing exhaustive alternatives, and effectively implementing the best courses of action. MAWS also educates officers to conduct effective operational planning as members of planning teams in multinational, interagency, joint, and maritime environments. In addition to the core courses offered by the CNC&S, MAWS students complete a series of planning-oriented electives and a thirteen-week capstone project.

We are also currently reviewing our highly regarded Electives Program to ensure that the student effort expended here, which constitutes 20 percent of their entire academic program, provides the critical education and essential credentials needed to best serve the Joint War Fighter.

The years between the first and second world wars are often referred to as the Naval War College's golden era, when officers who would ultimately win World War II in the Pacific spent time in Newport studying the many potential futures they were likely to face. Today, we find ourselves in a similar period, having drawn down from a dozen years of conflict, and officers should now seek out the opportunity to invest in themselves and further improve their ability to think strategically and contribute to the needs of the Joint Force of the future. Just as no two students are alike and no two careers mirror one another, the "Newport experience" varies by an individual's aspirations, interests, and goals. At the College students are allowed to create educational experiences tailored to their personal needs. The three core courses function as the firm foundation on which each individualized program is built. By choosing one of the specialized programs outlined above or by selecting a series of elective courses in a given Area of Study, students can craft the educational program that best prepares them for the rest of their careers—and beyond!

The Naval War College truly provides *education that matters*.

WALTER E. "TED" CARTER, JR.

*Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
President, Naval War College*